

REMARKS

This Amendment responds to the final Office Action mailed April 24, 2006 in the above-identified application. The Amendment places the application in condition for allowance and does not require a new search. Accordingly, entry of the Amendment and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

By this amendment, claims 1, 16, 18 and 28 are amended. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-12, 16-20, 24-26 and 28 are pending, with claims 1, 16 and 28 being independent claims. No new matter has been added.

The Examiner's courtesy in conducting a telephone interview on September 20, 2006 is acknowledged with appreciation. Participating in the interview were the Examiner, inventors Bruce Hecht and Robert Duris, and Applicants' attorney, William R. McClellan. Applicants explained that the cited Hecht reference (U.S. 6,507,231) does not disclose or suggest reducing a slew current in a termination mode as claimed. Instead, Hecht discloses constant slew current sources. The Examiner acknowledged that the present invention differs from Hecht and suggested that Applicants file amended claims which more clearly define the slew current feature. A proposed amendment was subsequently indicated by the Examiner to be acceptable.

The Examiner has finally rejected claims 1, 2, 6-8, 11, 12, 16 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Hecht et al. (U.S. 6,507,231). Claims 10, 17 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Hecht et al in view of Kardash (U.S. 6,137,329). Claims 18 and 24-26 are indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the amended claims.

As discussed during the telephone interview, Hecht discloses in Fig. 3 a driver circuit including slew current sources 29A and 29B, both of which are constant current sources. Hecht contains no disclosure or suggestion of a driver circuit wherein a slew current is reduced in a termination mode. In particular, Hecht does not disclose or suggest a driver circuit wherein the slew current is reduced for the output stage by switching a slew current source from a first slew current

value to a second slew current value that is less than the first slew current value, as required by amended claim 1. For these reasons, amended claim 1 is clearly and patentably distinguished over Hecht, and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 6-8 and 10-12 depend from claim 1 and are patentable over Hecht for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 16 is directed to a driver circuit for use in automatic test equipment and has been amended to require that reducing the slew current for the output circuit includes switching a slew current source from a first slew current to a second slew current, which is less than the first slew current. Amended claim 16 is clearly patentable over Hecht for the reasons discussed above in connection with claim 1.

Claims 17-20 and 24-26 depend from claim 16 and are patentable over Hecht for at least the same reasons as claims 1 and 16.

Claim 28 is directed to a method for operating a driver circuit in automatic test equipment and has been amended to include method limitations that parallel the apparatus limitations of claim 16. Amended claim 28 is patentable over Hecht for at least the reasons discussed above in connection with claims 1 and 16.

Based upon the above discussion, claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-12, 16-20, 24-26 and 28 are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

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